

PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL

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We all miss Bob Drewel – but everyone here assures me – he'll be back.

I asked Bob what I should talk about tonight. He said just tell them how close the Puget Sound Partnership and your Action Agenda and our 2040 Vision are – read it, and then read it again – he's right. Then I read the article on your 2040 Vision in Crosscut, the online newspaper. The people are showing up in the region as predicted but they aren't living where we hoped. So am I hitching our wagon to a rising star? Or a falling angel?

You can bet I am not going to back away from what Bob suggested. I think we are closely tied and I'll tell you why in a minute.

Last week the NBA owners took away our professional basketball team. We lost the Sonics. And our region has been diminished. It doesn't matter whether you like basketball. Any time a city like Seattle loses a major institution, whether it is a sports franchise or a symphony or the opera or an Art Museum, part of what has defined the city for some of its citizens is gone. If you don't believe me, read some of the agonized letters to the editor in the newspapers or listen to the cries of hurt on talk radio.

It doesn't matter whether you are a sports fan or a patron of the arts; we all lose when a part of us is no longer here. My purpose in pointing this out is not to assign blame but to emphasize how swiftly something that benefits us and that we cherish can disappear. Besides it has been said, if you criticize someone you

should walk a mile in their shoes. That way, when you criticize them you're a mile away and you have their shoes.

Puget Sound not only defines our region, it is our region – our place. It's disappearance as a healthy, diverse and thriving ecosystem will not occur overnight – like the Sonics – it will take decades of half-hearted measures, unwise development and inattention to render it something much different than it was when we humans arrived. If that happens – if we permit it to happen – unlike the Sonics, we will have no one to blame but ourselves and believe me we will be greatly diminished. So now is the time to act.

We know enough about what the problems are to act and the Puget Sound Partnership has been proposed by the Governor and created by the Legislature to ensure that action takes place. In fact, we are charged with creating an Action Agenda by December 1st of this year.

That Agenda will try and answer four questions:

- 1) What does a healthy Puget Sound look like?
- 2) What is the state of Puget Sound's health today?
- 3) What actions are necessary to get us from where we are to where we need to be by 2020? (That is the deadline we have, not 2040.)
- 4) In what sequence should we pursue those actions – where should we start?

I suspect that our Action Agenda for all twelve counties in Puget Sound will look much like your Vision 2040 document for King, Snohomish, Pierce and Kitsap Counties which was finalized today. I assume it was. In fact, if your vision statement had been a little more geographically ambitious and covered all 12 counties, and it had the requisite local government and citizens buy in, and it was being implemented, it might not have been necessary to create

the Puget Sound Partnership. All of which suggests that close cooperation – indeed a partnership, as Bob Drewel suggests, between the Puget Sound Regional Council and the Puget Sound Partnership is essential for our collective success.

In my judgment, the future of Puget Sound will be largely a function of how wisely we can fashion land use practices that will protect the spaces from the shorelines to the Cascades in the East and the shorelines to the Olympics in the West. These practices will depend on a framework of land management incentives that recognize the importance of cost sharing, a regulatory system that is clear, flexible and sensitive to legitimate landowner concerns, all coupled with a strong landowner ethic of stewardship. And, of course, what happens on the land is also critical to the current and future quality of life in the communities you represent.

Fortunately, there is a powerful recognition of these elements of success in your Vision 2040 Plan and the Salmon Recovery Plan created by the Shared Strategy and approved by NOAA. The completion of the Salmon Recovery Plan and its implementation are now part of the structure and assignment of the Puget Sound Partnership.

I am convinced if we are to restore our precious ecosystem we must figure out how to give all levels of government, including tribal governments, businesses, farmers, fishing and environmental interests and concerned citizens a voice in our approach. That means, we all have to be involved in the development as well as the implementation of the necessary actions. How do we turn your vision 2040 and the Puget Sound Partnership's Action Plan into reality? Remember, as tough as it is to develop these plans, implementation is a whole lot tougher. According to the article by Doug MacDonald in Crosscut yesterday, implementation of 2040 is only going to get harder.

Everyone needs to be involved and everyone needs to commit. Over the years, I've learned a little about what it takes to gain citizen support for how to manage our natural resources.

But before we get too serious here, let me first recognize the vital work of the government you are doing as local elected officials.

Local government is where the buck really stops in America - the endless night meetings, the Saturday workshops and tours, the phone calls at dinner hour, the reports to be read. Most of the solutions for land management problems advanced at the Federal or State level end up in your laps. I sure found that out at EPA.

I've had a lot of great jobs in my lifetime - I started out as a state's attorney for my home state's health department. I've had time to reflect about what makes a job truly rewarding. I've concluded there are four important criteria - interest, excitement, challenge and fulfillment.

Public service is the only place where I've been able to find all four. You are working for a cause that is beyond self-interest and larger than the goals people normally pursue. You're not there for the money you're there for something beyond yourself and that's fulfilling.

So while I thank you for your willingness to serve, I envy you the personal satisfaction public service provides. Democracy continues to thrive in our country because people such as yourselves have, generation after generation, stood up and volunteered for public service.

We all owe you.

So what do we do to enlist citizen support for the necessary work of the government? Remember, there is no cookie-cutter

approach for bringing people together, for changing long-held differing views, for reaching consensus on actionable plans that involve changed behavior. Every situation is different – like snowflakes – and there are no quick fixes or silver bullet solutions.

But there are some common threads that are effective in bringing people together - to collaborate - to do things they might not have thought were achievable.

The first is to recognize that collaborative governmental or private processes need time to work. People must develop trust in an atmosphere where trust has been eroded. Be patient, you don't earn interest on your "trust" account until you've made deposits.

Second, every important stakeholder or group with a vital interest must be at the table early. When you include all of the interests you almost guarantee the result will overcome the posturing of single-interests and that people will listen before passing judgment. Everyone wants to see the cards dealt to the players who can affect the outcome.

Third, there is a need for a sponsor of any important collaborative process and it should be a relevant government authority – the Governor say, or the legislature. And those governmental sponsors should signal in unambiguous terms that the process is the only game in town, and that what comes out of the process will end up being public policy. Then everyone must play or risk being left out.

Fourth, the alternative to a collaborative solution must be perceived as unacceptable to the parties. Everyone must believe they have something to lose. There must be a stick along with the carrot – and the stick can be the terror of the unknown, or the unpredictable, or simple exhaustion with the courts or the legislature as instruments of public problem solving.

Fifth, professional facilitation and access to technical advice is essential. Ordinary citizens have an amazing ability to filter through scientific information and come up with reasonable findings. Government needs to be a participant in these processes, but it is often better to operate under the auspices of a non-governmental, neutral organization. We have to face the fact that lots of people just don't trust government. Let the citizens decide how to get there. Government can decide why something needs attention. Puget Sound is dirty. Government can help decide what needs to be done. Puget Sound needs to be cleaned up. But how to do it? – That's where the citizen comes in.

On that point, digressing for a moment, some have tried to tell me that land use, environmental and natural resource issues are too complicated for the public to solve, that citizens just don't have the knowledge they need to make good decisions.

My response to them is to quote Thomas Jefferson. He once pointed out that if people appeared not enlightened enough to exercise their control of government; the solution was not to take away their control but to “inform their discretion by education”.

Jefferson might have added that what we need in public debate in this country are more facts and fewer opinions. As Thomas Carlyle has taught us, “Where facts are absent, opinion flourishes”.

Sixth, you have to confront economics in some detail. You want the outcome to provide an agreement that leads to action. Make no mistake: these processes are ultimately about who gets what. Their real genius lies in discovering that different sides can each get what they need, and that the pie we are sharing is bigger than we thought.

Finally, such a process must have as its goal some deep and meaningful solution – it has to get to the heart of the issue. And success has to offer promise to all sides of something perceived to be valuable and important.

I have tremendous confidence in the ability of ordinary citizens to come together in collaborative processes and make good decisions. We must seek to enlist those citizens in seizing and directing their own future.

As the Puget Sound Partnership develops our Action Agenda we are trying mightily to involve everyone to get their advice and enlist their support. This must be particularly true of local government.

The news for Puget Sound is by no means all bad. Most industrial waste water discharge permits are in compliance. We've expanded and improved sanitary sewer systems and treatment plants, and even more is being done. We've reduced the use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides that make their way into Puget Sound.

Tremendous efforts, by thousands of people, have improved shoreline and near-shore habitat to benefit fish, birds and animals. A combination of the Trust for Public Land, the Nature Conservancy and People for Puget Sound has committed to restoring 100 miles of shoreline by June of 2009.

The bad news is most of the easy stuff has already been done – and still it's not nearly enough to keep Puget Sound from further deterioration. Ultimately, what must be done affects how we use a lot of land.

Help is on the way – we hope.

By December, we will have an Action Agenda that:

- divides the Sound into geographic areas,
- identifies major sources of pollution,
- prioritizes cleanup and preservation efforts, and
- holds agencies, our partners and us accountable.

One of the big challenges we face – because most of the point source pollution has been capped – is to get people focused on the ecosystem as a whole. That's why we were all so pleased to see this in the Vision 2040 Plan. You – the members of the Puget Sound Regional Council recognize more than most some of the cold hard facts that we face.

Our population is growing at more than twice the national average. We already have 4 million people in Puget Sound and another 1.5 million people are expected to join us by 2020 and more after that. If growth continues at current average housing densities, the housing needed to accommodate them will require developing a big percentage of remaining developable land. Your 2040 vision document and the Cascade Land Conservancy recognizes we can't develop the way we have in the past and meet our housing, transportation, electrical, water and environmental goals.

Rain water runs off roofs, buildings, parking lots, roads and farms. It flows to streams and rivers on its way to Puget Sound. It makes no sense to spend millions of dollars trying to clean up Puget Sound unless we do a much better job of controlling the pollution that gets in rainwater runoff. This means to restore Puget Sound we must treat existing sources of storm water runoff and create more pervious services as we develop in the future.

Over the past 30 years, Puget Sound has lost a lot of timberland, much of it converted to single family large lot residential use. Forests, especially working forests, are a crucial environmental and economic resource.

Meanwhile farms located in our river valleys and estuaries are struggling to survive economically in the face of high real estate values and regulatory requirements. We are looking to those same areas for recovering the habitat needed for salmon to survive. Farmers and rival landowners need help to survive, especially as they adapt to more salmon and ecosystem-friendly practices.

Bulkheads, dikes, dams, gates and levees have been built throughout much of Puget Sound and on the major rivers altering their natural functions, reducing habitat, and affecting water quantity and quality.

The evidence of climate change continues to build and the potential impacts include:

- More rain and less snow in winter
- Less water supplies in the summer
- Changes in growing seasons
- Increased flooding and storm water issues

Neither the Puget Sound Partnership – nor the Vision 2040 Plan – can adequately address these issues alone. The challenges are integrated and so too must be the solutions.

What is needed is a comprehensive strategy that is focused on sustainability – the economy, housing, transportation, air, water quality and quantity, threatened species, land use – in short, the entire ecosystem and everything we humans do to impact it.

And we need a strategy for implementation of these well intentioned plans. The public is always in favor of the promise of environmental laws – clean air, clean water, a healthy Puget Sound — its what must be done to achieve these public goals where the public balks. Go to any city in America and ask the question: “Do you think the CAA should be more strictly enforced?” 85% will say, Yes. Then ask, “Ok, how about spending 20 minutes every two years getting your car’s engine tested to meet emission standards?” 85% say “wait a minute, that’s not what I had in mind” On these kinds of issues; the American people are ideological liberals and operational conservatives. Unless we immerse the public in the substance of a cleaner Puget Sound we will get a similar response.

Recovering the health of Puget Sound and maintaining the prosperity of the region is the task of the Puget Sound Partnership

Our efforts must be integrated with yours – the Vision 2040 – and the Cascade Land Conservancy’s Cascade Agenda and a lot of other initiatives.

We need to pull together all of the creative energy being generated and make sure our individual efforts are coordinated, complimentary, integrated and working toward the common goal of creating an economically and environmentally sustainable region. Our combined efforts must provide encouragement for the right mix of government at all levels including tribes, and we must engage environmental, business, agricultural, fisherman and citizen interests if we are to succeed. This is easy to say and tough to do.

To accomplish something as monumental as restoring the health of a place like Puget Sound, the planets need to align. An opportunity like this happens only about once in a generation. It has happened now and we must seize the opportunity.

Governor Gregoire, and the legislature, have made Puget Sound a non-partisan priority. Our congressional delegation puts Puget Sound at the top of their agenda. It is not now and must not become a partisan issue!

Federal agencies – NOAA, EPA, USF&WS – always want a national environmental success story and they and other agencies have formed a Puget Sound federal caucus to accomplish it right here. Their State agency counterparts have done the same.

The 12 counties bordering on Puget Sound – and the cities within – are working together on Puget Sound issues. Your Puget Sound Regional Council is a leader.

The Indian tribes of Washington – long-time leaders on fisheries and environmental issues – are lending their expertise and support.

Business, industrial, environmental, conservation, fisherman, education and civic leaders are getting involved, and showing they too believe that the future of Puget Sound matters.

We are in the right place to make this happen. We have the experience, the brains, and yes the money and the environmental ethic to do what needs to be done.

Our region's leaders in the past had the foresight to set aside hundreds of thousands of acres to create Olympic, Mount Rainier and North Cascades national parks;

Likewise, they showed the way for the country and cleaned up Lake Washington and preserved this gem in our midst.

This is a region of business genius – the birthplace of Weyerhaeuser, Boeing, Microsoft, Starbucks, Amazon and many

more.

And it continues today: All the local governmental entities you represent – are leading the nation in the fight against climate changes.

So I know we can do this. We value Puget Sound – its water and its land – today and for future generations. We have the creativity, the brainpower, and the resources to reverse its decline and put it on a healthy trajectory.

On a final note, we should not forget, no one else has figured out how to restore and maintain large ecosystems like Puget Sound and still provide for the prosperity of us humans. The Chesapeake, the Everglades, the Coast of Louisiana and the Great Lakes and on and on, are cases in point. With all we have going for us here, we should be able to show the world how it's done.

It really is up to us.

It is unthinkable we would not seize the moment.